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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN

ST. ANDREW'S, DUBLIN;

Before the HONOURABLE

HOUSE of COMMONS:

On THURSDAY, Nov. 29, 1759;

Being the DAY appointed for a

GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

By *WILLIAM FLETCHER*, L.L.D.

Archdeacon of *Kildare*, Prebendary of *St. Patrick's*, and Rector of
St. Mary's, Dublin.

DUBLIN:

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M,DCC,LX.

Jovis 6° Die Decembris, 1759°.

ORDERED, That the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Doctor *Fletcher*, for the excellent Sermon by him preached before this House the 29th of *November* last, the Day appointed for a Publick Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the great Success with which he has been pleased to bless His Majesty's Arms, and that he be desired to Print the same, and that Mr. *John Bourke*, and the Honourable Mr. *James O'Bryen* do acquaint him therewith.

E. Sterling,

H. Alcock,



Dom. Com.

PSALM xi. Verse 11.

Serve the Lord with Fear and rejoice with Trembling.

The Context runs thus :

Be Wise now therefore O ye Kings : Be instructed ye Judges of the Earth. Serve the Lord with, &c.

THE Admonition in my Text is, you see, of a Publick Nature, being addressed to Kings and Judges of the Earth, and, through them, to their respective People.

The Psalm itself is a prophetic Call to the Princes and Governors of the World to obey the Prophecies concerning the Messiah, who, altho' appearing in the lowly Circumstances of Mortality, was naturally * *higher than all the Kings of the Earth*, being King by Descent, and eldest in Effect of the eldest Line from Adam ; but chiefly as being † *Heir of all Things*, and ‖ *Head of all Principality*

* Ps. 89. 27. † Heb. 1. 2, ‖ Col. 2. 10.

lity and Power; cautioning them at the same Time to embrace the Blessings of his Kingdom with Fear and Trembling: For tho' his Appearance was to be Matter of *great Joy to all People*, and it was He, who should *give Victory unto Kings* by delivering them from the Power of the devil and his instruments, under whom they had been so long and miserably enslaved, they were nevertheless to be upon their guard against the wiles of their old Master, lest, being tempted to deny, oppose, or desert Christ's Kingdom, they should provoke his Wrath, who (as we are told by a Prophet * and an Apostle †) had Power over them, *as the Potter over his Clay*, and tho' his Coming forth should be as a *tender Plant*, as a *Root out of a dry Ground* § could break them with a *Rod of Iron*, and dash them in Pieces like a *Potter's Vessel*. Be wise now therefore O ye Kings, be instructed ye Judges of the Earth. Serve the Lord with Fear, and rejoice with Trembling.

From the Precept in my Text I shall take occasion, First, to set before you the true Nature and Spirit of Christian Rejoicing; and,

Secondly, shall apply the same to the present happy Solemnity. And First &c.

Now one would think, that Joy, as well as Love, must in its several Proportions cast out Fear, and that Passions so contrary in their Nature and Operations cannot long or easily stand together. But the Distinction between a *Servile* and *Filial*, a *Natural* and *Religious* Fear has been observed long since; between the Apprehension of some Evil advancing or intended against us, and that kindly Combination of Love and Esteem, Affection and Awe, which tempering

* Jer. xiii. 6. † Rom. ix. 20. § Isaiah 53. 2.

tempering and restraining each other, acquire thereby a new name and nature, and is best known by what in our other translation, and in the language of an Apostle is called *Reverence*.

When the *Natural* man, *i. e.* one, who is a stranger or indifferent to the mercies of the Gospel, contemplates the Almighty as Judge and Avenger, as cloathed with Majesty and Terrour, amidst Clouds and Darkness, and the like emblems of wrath; in all the formality of *Legal* worship, amid the slaughter and blood of beasts, the smoke and tumult of Sacrifice, and chiefly as executing his judgments against offenders; when he thinks of Him as a GOD of Justice, Purity, and Holiness, and from thence turns his eyes inward upon himself, he cannot but fear; and such Fear doubtless hath torment: Much more, should any alarming accident, should any hasty dread, whether from a distempered blood, or a kind impulse from Providence, awaken his guilt, and set the terrors of the Almighty in array before him, his fear and the torment thereof must be sevenfold.

But should he come to *taste the Goodness of the Lord*; to hear the Almighty speaking to him in the benign and gentle Spirit of the Gospel, calling, inviting, courting, adjuring him to *draw nigh unto him*; should he come to behold him in the amiable light of *Father, Redeemer, Comforter, Intercessor, Physician*, and even *Friend*, as buying him out of the hands of Divine Justice, and offering him in exchange for the vanities, and in recompence for the *light afflictions of this life*, an *eternal weight*, or preponderance of glory; in short, should he come to apprehend, what

mercy there is in store for him, how dearly purchased, how strongly secured, he must greatly rejoice: but still the first impression will in some measure remain. He still fears, as he becometh more sensible of his own unworthiness. He still fears, as well knowing the infirmities of his nature, and the power of his old Enemy. He still fears, for he cannot fully comprehend these *tydings of great joy*, without reflecting upon the wretched State, from which he is recovered. He looketh back to the dangers he hath escaped with a heart divided between pain and pleasure: so that Fear is the very foundation of his Joy, and in the words of my text, he *rejoiceth with trembling*.

Again: The Fear of not being able to attain, or, if attained, of losing what has long been the object of our worldly desires and pursuits, hath torment, for which the enjoyment of the thing itself generally proves a very insufficient compensation. But in our Spiritual course, in *pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of GOD in Christ Jesus*, though there may be fear, it is nevertheless over-ruled by the superiour charms and excellency of the Object, and being supported by a firm Faith, a lively Hope, and a consciousness of there being some virtue in such fear, it has more of Joy, than Pain, in the Composition.

[In *running the race that is set before them*, it is with such, as it was with *Virgil's* Competitors for the Prize,

Exultantiaq; haurit

Corda pavor---

or in the language of my text, *they rejoice with trembling*.] It is certain we cannot fix the precise limits of these different Affections, nor say where the one ends or
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the other begins : but whoever shall attend to the motions of his own heart, must know this to be true. We need not however have recourse to Experience for evidence in the case ; seeing the Holy Spirit, who *knoweth what is in man*, hath himself assured us of it, not only in my text, but in many other places. “ * *There is mercy with Thee, therefore shalt Thou be feared,*” saith David †. Solomon, in his book of *Proverbs* observes, that “ *in the Fear of the Lord is strong Confidence* §.” The Prophet *Isaiah* speaking of the Church’s glory upon the coming in of the *Gentiles* blends these two together, “ *Thine heart* (saith he) *shall fear and be enlarged* ||.” Thus the Women that were at the Sepulchre, and saw a Vision of Angels, it is said, *departed with fear and great joy*. And so in the Acts **, the Disciples are described as “ *walking in the fear of GOD, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.*”

From what has been said then, we may in some Measure perceive what is the nature and spirit of Christian Rejoicing. It is no loose, indeterminate act or operation of the mind, but is subject to it’s proper restraints, is to be tempered and chastised by Fear.

Joy is a delightful sensation arising in the mind upon the prospect or arrival of some good, or what we fancy to be such, and is great in proportion, as such good was unexpected or unmerited. The very Act of rejoicing is of itself, and so far, a Thanksgiving, as it testifies in some measure the sense we have of the blessing, and our obligation upon that score ; and therefore no wonder it is so often

* Ps. 130, 4.
|| Mat. 28, 8.

† Prov. 14, 26.
** Acts 9, 31.

§ Isaiah 60, 5.

often spoken of in Holy Writ as a Duty. But as Valour may degenerate into Brutality, Hope into Presumption, Fear into Despondency and the like; so Joy may end in Excess, Pride, Security, and Independency. When in undisciplin'd minds it riseth quick and violent, it is often over-set by its own weight, and dangerous in its effects, and in order to its being lasting, it must first settle back within its proper channel. Therefore GOD hath in his great wisdom and goodness (to use the Apostles elegant phrase) *temper'd* the mind as well as the body, by establishing a diversity of operations therein with a view to preserve the ballance of the whole. He hath appointed Hope to moderate Grief, Fear to repress the Insolence of Joy, and set Reason at the head to curb all unwarrantable passions and desires. But this curious Work of the Creator is gone much out of order. Reason is very weak and insufficient, and the Passions easily cast off that yoke. It is the design and tendency however of Christianity to repair and restore it, which it doth, as in other instances, so likewise in this Particular of *Rejoicing*.

The *Man of the World* indeed rejoiceth without Fear. Success tends only to render him presumptuous, *beady*, *high-minded*. His Joy is the Result of a looseness of Soul and an uncorrected blood; an idle lavishing of the Spirits, is restrain'd by no consideration, and is directed to no rational end. It is upon that score often taken short by some unexpected stroke from Providence, for which he is wholly unprepared, and the whole terminates at last in disappointment and chagrin. Whereas the Joy of the *Christian*

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is a solid, steady and rational delight, free from tumult or transport, governed by a due sense of GOD's goodness to him on the one hand, and of his own undeservings on the other. *David* being wrapt into Admiration and Thanksgiving upon a survey of GOD's love to mankind in his wonders of Creation and Redemption, seems to have taken his eye off from them, and to have turn'd it instantly and inwardly upon himself, when he cries out, * "*Lord what is Man that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man that thou vifitest him !*" *St. Paul*, who in his Epistles talks much of his *Joy and Rejoicing*, and, notwithstanding all his sufferings, had as much cause to do so as any; yet look'd upon himself as nothing, as the chiefest of Sinners, and confess'd, that it was only through *the Grace of GOD*, that he was what he was †, *an Apostle and Servant of Jesus Christ*. And thus all Holy Spirits, the more they have been filled with joy in the Holy Ghost, the less have they been full of themselves, the genuine and constant effect of such vouchsafements being a deeper sense of their own unworthiness to receive them. The same holds good likewise, in respect to *Temporal* good things, whether *National* or *Personal*. And

First, As to such as are *Personal*. A Good man will be somewhat jealous of what the world calls Good Fortune, much more should it come fast and frequently on. Tho' he rejoiceth in it as the gift of GOD, as a means of doing much good, he feareth nevertheless, lest he should seem to take his portion, to have his good things in this life; lest
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* Pf. viii. 4.

† 1. Cor. xv. 10.

his heart should be lifted up and he forget the Lord his GOD.

There is a phrase in the 1 Ep. of St. *Peter* *, than which nothing can be more expressive, or more pertinent to our present purpose, and which the consciousness and experience of his own sanguine temper prompted that Apostle to recommend to his Disciples, namely, *to gird up the loins of their minds*, as being apt to run loose upon any invitation from prosperity and the other allurements of the world.

But farther, he fears as a wise man, as having found in his own Accounts perhaps; as well as upon a due observation of the world about him, that a hasty, much more a continued tide of good fortune should be rather an argument with the party favoured to beware: forasmuch as, sooner or later, there is (we may observe) an abatement, a draw-back of some sort, in some shape or other upon it, some misfortune, many times, treading close upon any sudden or distinguish'd instance of success. We may see something of this sort every day we live. So little is man to be trusted with the Good, which the Almighty is pleased to bestow upon him. The like will his conduct be

2. In respect to such as are *National*. Upon any good accruing to his Country his Joy opens more widely, his heart becomes more enlarged, in proportion to the Object of it. He poureth out his Soul in thanksgiving before the Almighty; he joineth in yielding his proportion of honour and acknowledgment to the Authors and Instruments of

* 1 Pet. i. 13.

of it's success; and in short acquitteth himself, as becometh him, in this seasonable Duty of a good Subject. But while he rejoiceth before men, he humbleth himself before GOD. His Joy stands corrected, for he considereth the blessing to be designed (as in the case of the *Israelites*) to *humble* and to *prove* those to whom it is sent: much more, if upon looking round him he perceive the Goodness of the Almighty and the manners of his fellow-citizens to stand in a direct contradiction to each other. He doubts according to such their present state, whether they have a clear right to interpret these kindly events from Providence as an infallible token of their being in favour with Him. He remembereth that GOD delivered the Children of *Israel*, and multiplied their corn, and *laid no famine on them*, and yet as the Prophet tells us*, their *Actions were not good*, it was altogether for *his Name's sake, that he did This*. He reflects, that GOD's aim and intention in giving this success may lie much farther and higher, than our short-sighted reason can penetrate; and although the present generation may reap some benefit from it, he fears, lest it should prove a snare, and by their adding more ingratitude to the measure, it should overflow. In a word, he blesteth GOD *with fear, and rejoiceth with trembling*.

Having then shewn you, what is the true nature and spirit of Christian rejoicing, I proceed in the

Second place to apply the same to the present happy Solemnity.

We are met together this day, as well, I trust, in obedience to the motions of our own hearts, as to the Royal Precept,

Begin * Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

Precept, to pour out ourselves in Thanksgiving before the Almighty for those accumulated mercies, which He hath graciously vouchsafed to us; for that concurrence and extent of Victory, with which He hath been pleased to bless his Majesty's Arms in almost every quarter of the Globe.

To go through the several particulars of the Divine Goodness to these nations for some time past; to follow it from West to East, to the most distant and opposite points; to behold it appearing (as we humbly trust) on the side of an injur'd people against their old and avow'd Enemy, breaking down his strong holds, driving him back, like a beast of prey, within his own bounds from whence he had broke loose; restraining the cruelties and encroachments of this *Civil* Barbarian, this prostituer of Religion to the purposes of Ambition, and giving the *Key* to Those, who (whatever we may be in other respects, would to GOD we had as much to urge in our behalf under other Articles!) will, it is hoped, use it better to the honour of GOD, the interests and enlargement of of true Religion, and the Good of mankind——

To see the same Almighty Providence on the opposite Continent confirming in fact, what by his Spirit he had declared aforetime, that * *no King is saved by the multitude of an host*, making the native firmness and intrepidity of a brave Monarch a natural, and, we hope, a sufficient Shield against the united efforts of those *bands of wickedness*, that combination of Treachery and Ambition, Ingratitude
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* Ps. xxxiii. 16.

and Bigotry, which, under cover of asserting a doubtful and disputed property, had been masquing a deep and dangerous design against the very being of Protestantism itself—

To contemplate the same Divine power and goodness strengthening the hearts and hands of our fellow-subjects and Allies with an impenetrable firmness beyond the usual measure of humanity, against such formidable and superior numbers, on the plains of *Minden*—

To trace the same good Providence from *Africk* to the *Indies*, and, in short, our obligations *to praise Him from the rising up of the Sun to the going down of the same*; and add to all this, the more silent blessings of Heaven so visible upon our *Basket* and our *Store*—

To expatiate upon these particulars, how inviting a task soever it may be, does not so necessarily fall within my purpose, or the business of the place wherein I stand: we trust they are recorded *elsewhere* in much fairer and more durable characters. Nor would we be thought, from the drift of this discourse, to bring a shade over this Festival, or to suggest any fear of diminution or abatement of our present felicity: Nevertheless, Security is often dangerous, at all times unwise. But my Intent is to exhort you to rejoice indeed, but with that reserve upon your Joy, which becometh Wise men, or (which is the same thing, only in a much higher degree) as Christians; to apply the same to a Religious use, and by so doing, to make the Thanksgiving itself, as well as the Matter of it, turn to account.

We have much cause to rejoice; but have we not equal reason to be serious and humble too? The Psalmist seems

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to have considered things in this light. *There is mercy* (saith he) *with Thee, therefore shalt thou be feared,* and exhorteth the Great Ones of the Earth to *rejoice with trembling.* The Mercies of GOD, and his Acts of Goodness to the Children of *Israel* are said to have been designed to *humble* and to *prove* them, as well as his Judgments. In the mean time are we sure, that these favourable events are certain marks of GOD's peculiar regard and attention towards Us, independent of other and higher considerations? Nothing is more evident, than that as ill success is not always the distinguishing test of being wicked, so neither is prosperity of being righteous. For though *the battle be not always to the strong,* and without the Divine blessing the multitude of an host and all the instruments of war are vain, yet the wise Disposer of all things hath provided, that, in the general course of things, Success shall be the result of foresight, diligence, and perseverance. Besides, may not all this be owing more to the righteousness of our Cause than the soundness of our Morals? may not the cruelties of our Enemies have been their worst adversaries? May they not have been accessory in this and other respects to their own destruction? On the other hand our Misfortunes and Disappointments are often owing to want of Care; and the too frequent returns of *Scarcity* among Ourselves, may be ascribed in great measure to want of fore-thought, and an old unreasonable jealousy of the Plough.

Moreover, we may not, it is like, be able to comprehend to what remote purposes of Providence these fortunate beginnings may lead, in favour perhaps of some future generation, who shall serve Him better. May they not
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be intended to open a door to the poor *Indian* for the admission of the pure light of the Gospel, and to rescue them from the power of *Those*, who, by making Religion a cover to their ambitious aims, have abused their uneducated minds, over-ruling what little remaining notions of right and wrong, of honesty and good faith they had; inflaming their blood much even beyond its natural temper, and training them to the same detestable trade of treachery and cruelty with themselves?

Again; Though we do not take upon Us, to know *the time and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power*, it may be no unwarrantable hope or belief, that these successful steps, with other concurring circumstances and events, may have been co-operating, and have made some progress, towards loosening and dissolving that *Mystery of Iniquity*, that overgrown *Spiritual Tyranny*, which, at the time when it is meditating the extirpation of Others, may overset itself in the Attempt.

But should we avail ourselves of these good things, yet a considerate and well-disposed mind must feel some alloy to its joy, when it looks round and beholds the goodness of the Almighty and the manners of the world about him (as I hinted before) standing in full opposition to each other. He will fear the being brought farther into debt, when he perceives there is every day less ability and disposition to repay. Or suppose, after all, this series and concurrence of success and prosperity to be a token of GOD's countenance towards us, yet how shall we account for it all? shall we ascribe it to our Increase of Faith, our fervent Zeal for the Honour and Practice of True Religion, our inviolable adherence to good Faith, Honesty,

nesty, and Truth, our detestation of Perjury, our Chastity, Temperance, Frugality, and the like? Let every one here present lay his hand upon his breast, and impartially resolve himself upon this question. If he can answer in the affirmative, well: if not, it will follow of course, that This Duty of Public Thanksgiving must imply a good deal more; that it was never intended to stand within the scanty limits of one natural day; and that the best and most effectual proof of Gratitude we can yield, is to put away every thing, that may in any wise grieve or displease our Benefactor, and to do every thing that is well pleasing in his sight. Surely when *One*, whom we have been long provoking and treating as an Enemy, persists to be our Friend, an ingenuous mind cannot but feel ten times more compunction on the remembrance of its former hostilities and indignities against him.

But This, tho' it concern every man amongst us singly and apart; though it be fit and necessary, that each individual should withdraw that share of guilt, which his own particular sins are continually adding to the heap, is however a work in great measure of a Public nature, and calls very strongly for the aid and concurrence of *THOSE*, before whom I stand, both as Legislators and Magistrates.

*"That many worthy deeds are done unto this Nation by
 " YOUR providence, We accept it always and in all places
 " with all thankfulness:"* But permit us to say, Is it not a most dangerous species of double dealing, Is it not offering GOD thanks with one hand, and provoking Him at the same time with the other, to come before Him in the Duties

ties of this *Solemnity*, and at the same time to permit that notorious prophanation of the *Sabbath*, which is become a test of Distinction in those above us, and, among those below us, hath for some time past overspread our high ways from one end of the Kingdom to the other from Morning to Evening?

To reform this threatening evil;—To reduce those, who for many years back have been trained up in Succession to Riot and Outrage, who keep up a standing party against the publick peace, who are a nightly terror to our Streets, and, as the wise man remarks, *sleep not except they have done mischief and have caused some to fall*;—to prevent that empty Idol, modern Honour, from getting the better of Religion and common Honesty;—To suppress or disperse those mischievous assemblings, where Property, the vitals of a nation, is unnaturally and wantonly shifted from hand to hand, and even the will of the Deity sometimes presumptuously determined by the silly cast of a Dye;—To seize and punish those, from whom resound the loud Oath, the repeated Curse, which shock the heart of the passenger, and even yet tingle in our Ears;—To break up and totally annihilate those nests of Dunkeness and Brutality, where wickedness generally begins, where wretches purchase madness and stupidity at an easy rate, and find a shorter course to ruin, misery, and death; — Lastly, to Oppose jointly and severally all combinations against Religion and Virtue; For however men may contend for liberty, for the freedom of thinking and judging for themselves, there is always a line drawn, a barrier fix'd,

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a stop arbitrarily interposed in the way of right reason and conscience by that Usurper, the *Fashion*, which hath a power (I had almost said) equal to That, which *set bars and doors to the sea, and saith, hitherto shalt thou come and no farther*: so that few men (as matters now stand) dare step beyond their neighbour, or do justice to the strivings of natural judgment and conscience, tho' they plead ever so hard on the side of Religion and Goodness. In short it is a yoke put about the neck of those, who submit their own spirit and understanding to the ways of other men, agreeably to that of the Apostle, who, speaking of the pollutions of the world, observeth, that * *of whom a man is overcome*, or as the word literally signifies, is so far *lessen'd* as to be overborn by, *of the same is he brought into bondage*.

These and such like exertions of the Legislative, Magisterial and Personal Authority would, we humbly conceive, be the most proper expressions of a sincere and religious Gratitude, the most acceptable Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

The Trees of the Wood are in Scripture said † to *rejoice before the Lord*, which they do by circulating their sap, and performing their vegetable tasks in obedience to the laws of Creation, and in return for the *natural* blessings of heaven upon them. And these, like other parts of this material System, were designed as patterns to Man. Let us obey their admonition by discharging our several duties in our respective stations. This will be yielding the best sort of obedience to the *Royal Injunction*, must give the greatest vigour and efficacy to the duties of *This Solemnity*, and reach farther than *Prayer* and *Giving of Thanks* of themselves can do.

To

* 2 Pet. ii. 19.

† Ps. xcvi. 12.

To Conclude:

While we look up to GOD in joy and gratitude, let us look down upon ourselves with humility and fear. Let us unite our most just acknowledgments to the *Royal* Author (under GOD) of our Prosperity; in supporting Him, *i. e.* Ourselves, against the wretched Attempts of a desperate and sinking People, and in praying for That precious Life, for which we are so much indebted to the Almighty. Let us join in all due honour to the several instruments of our welfare and success. Let us congratulate our Country and each other, with some restraint however upon it from a tender remembrance of ~~THOSE~~, with whose safety and survival the attainment of all this good was unhappily found incompatible. Let us rejoice; but let us reflect with all lowliness of mind on what our SAVIOUR himself hath told us, that GOD is * *kind even to the Unthankful and to the Evil*, and that † *to whom he hath committed much, of them He will ask the more.*

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To whom, &c.

* Luke vi. 35.

† Luke xii. 48.

T H E E N D.

To Consider
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 is a great blessing to the
 into our hearts and to the
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 Let us rejoice; but let us reflect with all lowliness of mind
 on what our Savior himself hath told us, that GOD is
 kind even to the Gentiles, and that it is to be feared that
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To whom, &c.

THE END

